

Middleborough Antiquarian

Devoted to the preservation of local history by
MIDDLEBOROUGH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION, INC.

Established 1922

\$3.50

VOLUME XXXIII

WINTER 1995

NUMBER 2



BORN IN MIDDLEBOROUGH in the year 1841, Mercy Lavinia Warren Bump became internationally famous as Mrs. Tom Thumb, traveling all over the world in tours organized by the equally famous P.T. Barnum. Her memory lives on at the Middleborough Historical Museum, where many artifacts of her life are on display.

A Message from the President

The feature story in this issue of the Middleborough Antiquarian is about the "Little People." As we all know, Mercy Lavinia Warren Bump was born here in Middleborough on October 31, 1841.

At the Fall Meeting of the Association, we honored the memory of this lovely little lady who brought so much fame and attention to the Town of Middleborough in a dignified and gracious manner.

It is a joy and privilege to perpetuate her memory, and that of all the "Little People," with whom she was associated.

Sincerely,
Robert M. Beals, President



Ocean Spray
CRAVE THE WAVE™

Ocean Spray Cranberries, Inc. Lakeville-Middleboro, MA 02349
An Equal Opportunity Employer

CONTENTS

A Yankee Yarn	Page 4
Eaton's Family School	Page 8
Early Meetings with The Wampanoags	Page 12

A. T. Maddigan LAW OFFICE

P.O. Box 72
Thatcher's Row
Middleboro, MA 02346

947-0645

Thomas A. Maddigan

- Estate Planning • Wills
- Probate • General Practice of Law

MIDDLEBOROUGH ANTIQUARIAN

Middleboro, Mass.

VOLUME XXXIII WINTER 1995 NUMBER 2

Robert Barboza, Editor

OFFICERS OF THE ASSOCIATION

President	Robert M. Beals
Vice President	Thomas Weston
Secretary	Gladys M. Beals
Treasurer	Patricia A. Chesk
Directors	Thomas A. Maddigan George Barden Eileen L. Atkins
Museum Director	Marsha Manchester
Curator	Marsha Manchester

Historical Association Annual Membership

Single	\$10.00	Sustaining	\$ 50.00
Family	15.00	Benefactor	100.00
Participating	20.00	Life	200.00

Membership includes each issue of Middleborough Antiquarian. Subscriptions \$10.00 per year. Single copies \$3.50.

Dues and subscriptions—mail to Middleborough Historical Association, P.O. Box 304, Middleboro.

General Tom Thumb and the Turkey

The Editor of the "Courier and Enquirer," Colonel Webb, when the General visited him soon after his arrival in New York in 1841, thus describes him in that paper:—

SOMETHING NEW UNDER THE SUN. — While quietly discussing our dinner, we were honoured with a very unceremonious visit from no less a personage than the distinguished GENERAL TOM THUMB. We were somewhat annoyed at the interruption at first, but discovering its cause, once the honour was conferred upon us, very quietly proceeded at the operation of carving a turkey, which Mr. Barnum, who accompanied the General, assured us weighed more than His Grace. We were somewhat disposed to question this; but, when informed that General Thumb weighs precisely fifteen pounds, two ounces! we admitted the truth of the assertion, and placed the General alongside of our plate to superintend the operation of carving. He took his station with great "sang-froid," and amid the roar of our little ones, quietly kicked aside a tumbler of water, which he considered dangerous in the event of his falling into it. As soon as we had carved the turkey to his satisfaction, he very gracefully walked around the table, at the risk of being drowned in a wine glass, paid his respects to all who were sitting around it, and selected a seat for himself in which he ate a very hearty dinner, and drank to the health of all present in a glass of Malmsy. All this may appear fiction to the reader, but it is the sober truth. General Tom Thumb weighs fifteen pounds, two ounces, and is exactly twenty-eight inches high!

From SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF CHARLES S. STRATTON KNOWN AS GENERAL TOM THUMB, published in 1847

Decas, Murray & Decas *Attorneys-at-law*

COL. PETER H. PEIRCE HOUSE
(Next to Middleboro Public Library)

132 N. Main St.
Middleboro, MA

947-4433

George C. Decas, Esq.
Daniel F. Murray, Esq.
William C. Decas, Esq.

A Yankee Yarn

(Portions of this article were written by Alton H. Blackington in 1945)

The story I have for you here is a real honest-to-goodness fairy tale, if ever there was one.

But in the Town of Middleborough, Massachusetts - where the fairy tale began in a big New England farmhouse and ended in a mansion filled with trophies from all over the world, the thrilling romance of an international famous foursome is all but forgotten.

There are very few residents of this town who ever heard of the beautiful Bump sisters, Lavinia and Minnie. I'm going to tell you briefly about Lavinia and Minnie Bump, and how their names became bywords in every American home and why their pictures were printed and purchased all over the world.

Come with me, then, to Middleborough on a warm, sleepy Sunday morning about 1850.

The faint breeze that stirs the drooping, dust-laden trees is tinged with the perfume of new-mown hay drying in the sun, and the still air is filled with clouds of dust rising from the carriages that move slowly along the country roads towards the First Congregational Church at the Green.

After the horses have been tied up in the shed behind the church, men and women pair off into little groups for a bit of gossip before going inside the church.

Suddenly all talking stops as a tall black-bearded man in a beaver hat steps into view, with his wife, almost as tall as he, followed by a little girl between two strapping young men.

"Howdy, Brother Bump. How's crops in Warrentown? Good corn weather, eh? Bet we'll get a shower 'fore the day's over. Howdy, James and Benjamin. My goodness, you fellers are almost as big as your father!"

If Mrs. Bump noticed the slight, she said nothing. If she saw that all eyes were on her little girl, Lavinia, she gave no sign.



LAVINIA WARREN, pictured at eight years old, became Middleborough's most famous daughter.



PLYMOUTH STREET was home to Mercy (Lavinia) and Huldah (Minnie) Bump in their early years.

She must have known they did look strange, all of them so tall, and little Lavinia only two feet high.

With her round sweet face and bright dark eyes, and tiny hands, she looked more like a doll.

"Just like a doll," one woman whispered. "You know, there's something the matter with that child. She's going on ten, and she's a foot shorter than a yard-stick. She's pretty as a picture, and they say she's smart . . . but I think she's a dwarf! What a burden she'll to be the Bumps, being as how she'll never be able to do much of anything."

When Mercy Lavinia Warren Bump was born on October 31, 1841, she weighed a normal six pounds, but she didn't grow or gain weight as fast as other children. When she was ten, she was just twenty-four inches high, and weighed only twenty pounds.

When her sister, Huldah Pierce Bump, was born in 1849, she was even smaller, and together the two tiny sisters, perfectly formed in every way, became the pets of the family and the neighborhood. They detested being called "cute" and "cunning" and determined at a very tender age to let nothing keep them from a healthy, normal existence.

Lavinia didn't go to the little red schoolhouse a short distance from the Bump home until she was nine years old, and by that time she knew as much as the teacher. Her proud aristocratic Yankee mother had taught her so well that she was always ahead of her normal-sized classmates in school. She left school and was taught how to cook, sew and take care of a home by her mother.

A few years later, when Lavinia was sixteen years old a distant relative, Col. J.H. Wood, visited the Bump family and told of his travels on a Mississippi River Show Boat. Lavinia's big dark eyes sparkled.

"Oh, please take me with you!" she begged. "I do so want to travel and see things and people."

So it came to pass that in 1858, Mercy Lavinia Warren Bump packed a tiny trunk and set forth to see the world.

She toured the West and South, and there she met General Grant and Stephen A. Douglas, who picked her up like a doll and attempted to give her a fatherly kiss. Blazing with embarrassment, Miss Bump informed him that she was eighteen years old, and not in the habit of kissing strange men.

Lavinia was playing in Montgomery, Alabama when the Civil War broke out, and upon the advice of her manager, took the first train north. She had hardly time to settle down on the farm in Middleborough when she was asked to teach in the little schoolhouse she had attended briefly several years earlier.

Soon after, she received an invitation that changed her entire life, and brought fame and fortune to herself and her family - and to Phineas Taylor Barnum.

P.T. Barnum had already made a lot of money with his two male "little people," Commodore George Washington Nutt and Charles Sherwood Stratton (known to millions as General Tom Thumb), and when he heard about the diminutive Lavinia, he asked her parents to bring her to Bridgeport, Connecticut.

Barnum had traveled all over the World and met all kinds of people, but when he saw little Lavinia, he was swept off his feet by her charm, grace and youthful beauty.

So the tiny country girl who "did so want to travel and see things and people" signed a contract for five years, and Barnum rushed off to find a dressmaker who could fashion the costliest "doll's clothes" ever designed.

Then Lavinia learned pieces to speak and songs to sing and rehearsed a skit with Commodore Nutt - and overnight they

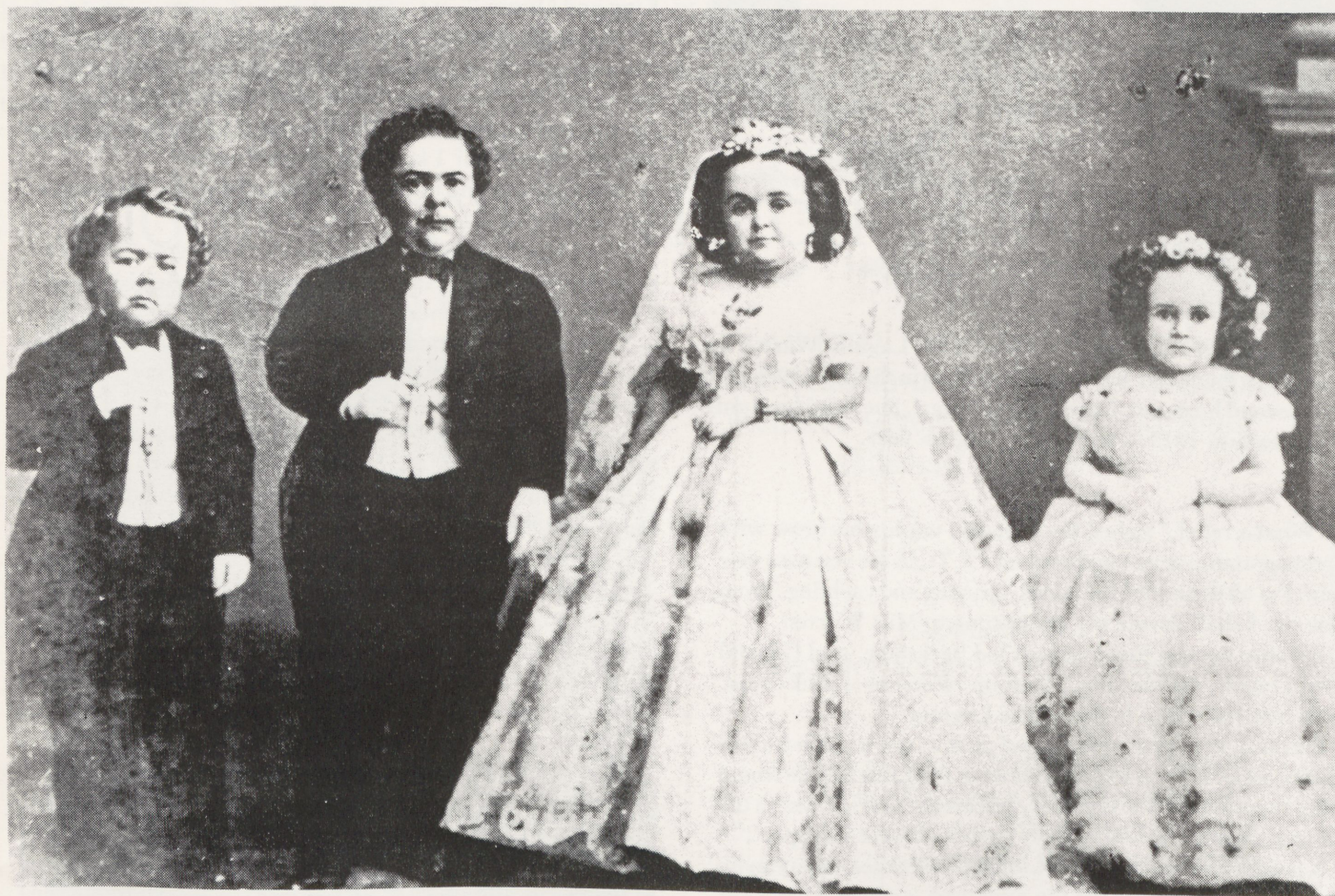
became the sensation of Barnum's American Museum in New York City. Barnum also convinced her to change her last name to Warren, her mother's maiden name, which he considered more suitable for theatrical purposes. Later, when little sister Minnie was employed by Barnum, she also changed her last name to Warren.

Tiny Commodore Nutt was several years younger than Lavinia, but that didn't prevent him from falling in love with her. She considered him "just a little boy" and brushed him aside.

Then one fine, fall day, Tom Thumb arrived from Bridgeport all dressed up in his yachting costume, gold braid, gold buttons and everything. He took one long look at the angel-faced little lady from Middleborough, and marched into Barnum's private office.

"Look, P.T.," he said, "look old man, I've fallen in love. Yes I have; it's really hit me. I'm in love with Lavinia Warren. No, of course she doesn't know it. We haven't met yet. But I must marry her. Will you help me?"

"I'll introduce you, Tom, but you'll have to do your own courting," Barnum replied.



THE LITTLE PEOPLE who helped make Middleborough famous — Charles Stratton, also known as Gen. Tom Thumb, and Lavinia (Warren) Bump — made front page news on Feb. 10, 1863 with what was termed The Fairy Wedding. Commodore George Washington Nutt (left) and Minnie Bump attended the happy couple at the celebrity wedding, reported in newspapers all over the world, thanks to the promotional efforts to their employer, showman P.T. Barnum.

A Yankee Yarn...



RETIRING FROM SHOW BUSINESS, Lavinia Warren returned to the family home in Middleboro in the late 1800's with her second husband, Count Primo Magri. She lived here until her death in 1919 in her seventy-eighth year.

"What a relief," sighed the General, wiping his brow with a postage-stamp sized handkerchief. "P.T., in me you see a new man. I'm all done with the horses, sporting and yachting. From now on, I shall devote my entire time to Miss Warren."

Barnum opened the door that led backstage, and General Tom Thumb, walking like a bantam rooster on a pink cloud, went into the wings to meet little Lavinia.

Barnum, of course, was tickled pink at this sudden turn of affairs, for he knew a wedding between the Little People would bring thousands to the museum, and create new interest in the General, whom he had already shown all over Europe.

A few days later, he said to Lavinia, "Why don't you run up to Bridgeport with me for the week-end, and get a little rest from the city?"

Lavinia thought that "would be just fine," and Commodore Nutt, smelling a rat, said he guessed he'd go along too. He'd go up by the late train, and Lavinia could wait up for him.

When Lavinia and Barnum arrived in Bridgeport, Tom Thumb met them with his coach and four, and he rushed

Lavinia all over the city, introduced her to his mother and the mayor, and showed her the real estate he owned, and the beautiful home he had built, with rooms scaled down to their size.

She was quick to see that here was a man of wealth and imagination, and she just loved the tiny expensive doll-sized furniture and fixtures.

Barnum had them at his house for dinner, and after cigars and coffee, he pretended he was tired, and left the little couple playing backgammon.

"Don't forget the Commodore," he said as he went upstairs to bed. "He's coming on the late train."

The moment P.T. was out of sight, Tom Thumb pushed his chair close to Lavinia's and slipped his arm around her tiny waist.

"Why, Mr. Stratton," she said with a blush, "what are you doing?"

"Lavinia," he said, "Are you going to London with Mr. Barnum?"

"Indeed I am, Mr. Stratton. And I'm to be received by the King and Queen."

"I know all about it," said Tom Thumb. "I've met them three times already. The King's a fine man and the Queen held me on her lap. But there are a thousand big rooms in Windsor Castle, and you might get lost. Don't you think I ought to go along to take care of you? I know all about Europe."

"Well, that would be nice," she whispered, with a faraway look in her eyes.

Tom Thumb moved closer and tightened his grip. "Lavinia," he whispered, "why can't we go as man and wife? I love you, Lavinia, won't you marry me?"

The sound of a carriage coming up the drive broke the spell, and almost broke Tom Thumb's heart too. "Say you will, Lavinia. Will you?"

She laid her little head on his manly shoulder, and whispered, "Yes."

A stamping in the hall, the ringing of the bell, and there was stalwart Commodore Nutt, with flowers and a heart full of love for Lavinia, now lost forever (but he didn't know it) to his rival, Tom Thumb.

"Humph," he glared at Stratton. "Do you live here? Where's Mr. Barnum?"

"He's gone to bed," Lavinia said, "but there's lunch for you."

"I don't feel like eating now," he said, and stomped off to his room.

After a quick goodnight kiss, the little lovers parted, and Tom Thumb, struggling to get up over the big stairs, pushed into Barnum's room and whispered, "Wake up P.T.! We're engaged! She said 'Yes' and I'm the happiest and luckiest man in the world. But, darn it all, P.T., I've got to go to Middleborough on Tuesday and ask her mother."

Mother Bump also said "Yes," and the wedding was set for February 10th, 1863, in Grace Episcopal Church in New York City. Thanks to P.T. Barnum and the newspapers, all America knew about the wedding, and everyone but Commodore was thrilled and happy.

He was a good sport, though, and stood up with the happy couple along with Lavinia's sister, Minnie Warren. Brady, the famous Civil War photographer, made the official photograph that was called "The Fairy Wedding," and it was said that one hundred thousand copies were sold.

Crowds lined the streets around Grace Church for hours, waiting to catch a glimpse of the tiny sweethearts.

Lavinia wore white satin with a flounce of costly point lace, and a long train to match. Her hair was covered with a bridal veil and orange blossoms.

General Thumb and the Commodore were in full dress suits, with white silk vests. Three thousand boxes containing pieces of the wedding cake were distributed.

Their beautiful wedding presents were on display, guarded by a squad of detectives, in the Metropolitan Hotel.

Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt gave them a gold and coral brooch, and earrings and studs of the finest workmanship. Mrs. August Belmont sent a costly sterling silver set, and from President and Mrs. Lincoln came a set of Chinese fire screens, and an invitation to visit the White House in Washington, where some time later President Lincoln gave them a big dinner and a grand reception.

In 1864, Lavinia's wish to see the world came true. With her husband, Tom Thumb, and her sister Minnie Warren and Commodore Nutt, the little lady from Middleborough left the United States for a triumphal tour of Europe that lasted for three long years.

In England, France, Belgium, and Germany, they were royally entertained and showered with gifts delicately designed and decorated for the doll-sized celebrities.

Returning in 1867, they toured the West and then sailed for the Orient, visiting the principal cities of China, Japan, India, and Russia. They sailed up the Yangtze and rode the Rajah's favorite elephant - and again came home to Middleborough, loaded down with inlaid furniture, rare silks, precious stones, and ivory elephants.

Tom and Lavinia had twenty wonderful years together. He died on July 15, 1883, at the age of forty-five.

Two years later, Lavinia married Count Primo Magri, and when their theatrical days were over, and they were little old folks, they returned to Middleborough to the scenes of Lavinia's childhood, among her relatives and many friends.

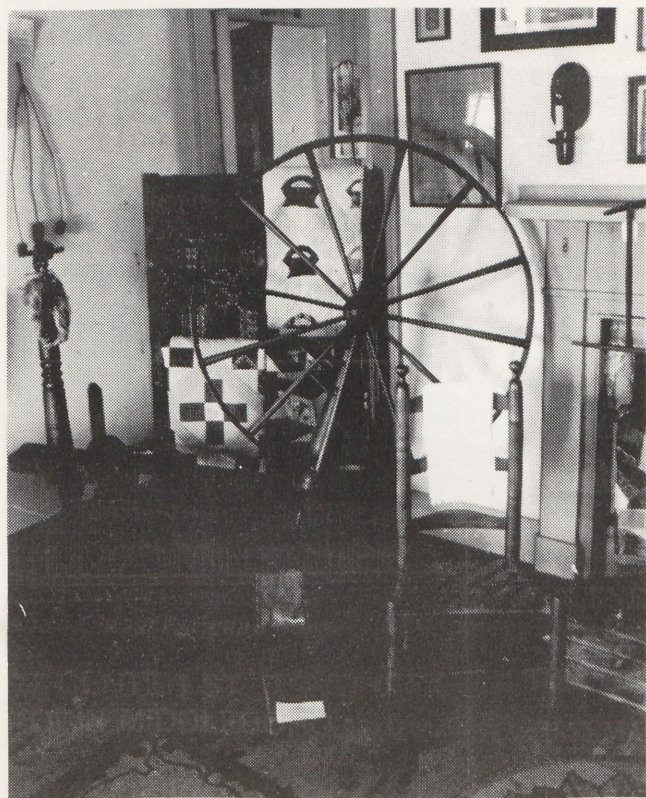
Next time you are in Middleborough, go into the Public Library and look at the life-size oil portraits of General Tom Thumb and his wife, Lavinia, who lived until 1919, intelligent, dignified, gracious, and VERY proud - a tiny little lady whose fairy tale dreams came true when she traveled in far-off lands.

That tiny couple captured the imagination of millions in many lands, because although they were small, they made a big impression as Ambassadors of Good Will.

PLEASE NOTE

And, visit the Middleborough Historical Museum on Jackson Street during the summer months, and you will find one of the largest collections of their memorabilia in the whole world.

Middleborough Historical Museum



Featuring Tom Thumb & his lady memorabilia and collection. Museum includes seven buildings and many different collections.

ADMISSION:

\$2.00 for adults \$1.00 for students

Open Wednesday - Saturday, July - August.
1st Two Week-ends in September.

Open by appointment only during the winter.
Call Director/Curator Marsha Manchester, 947-7120.

JACKSON STREET
MIDDLEBORO, MASSACHUSETTS
off Route 105, behind Police Station

Eaton's Family School

By Robert M. Beals

Mr. S. W. Marston established a boarding school for boys on East Grove Street about the year 1854. About the year 1859, he was succeeded by the Rev. Perez Lincoln Cushing, whose school was attended by pupils from different parts of the state.

Rev. Cushing was assisted by his wife, the former Miss Lavinia Parker, a preceptress of the Peirce Academy for many years. They took pupils into their home for instruction and to experience family life. However, pupils came in such numbers from Cape Cod and surrounding towns that the day pupils far exceeded those who boarded with the Cushing family.

Upon the death of Rev. Cushing, the school was purchased by Amos H. Eaton in company with his father, Rev. Herrick M. Eaton. They came from Norridgework, Maine. It became the Eaton Family School.

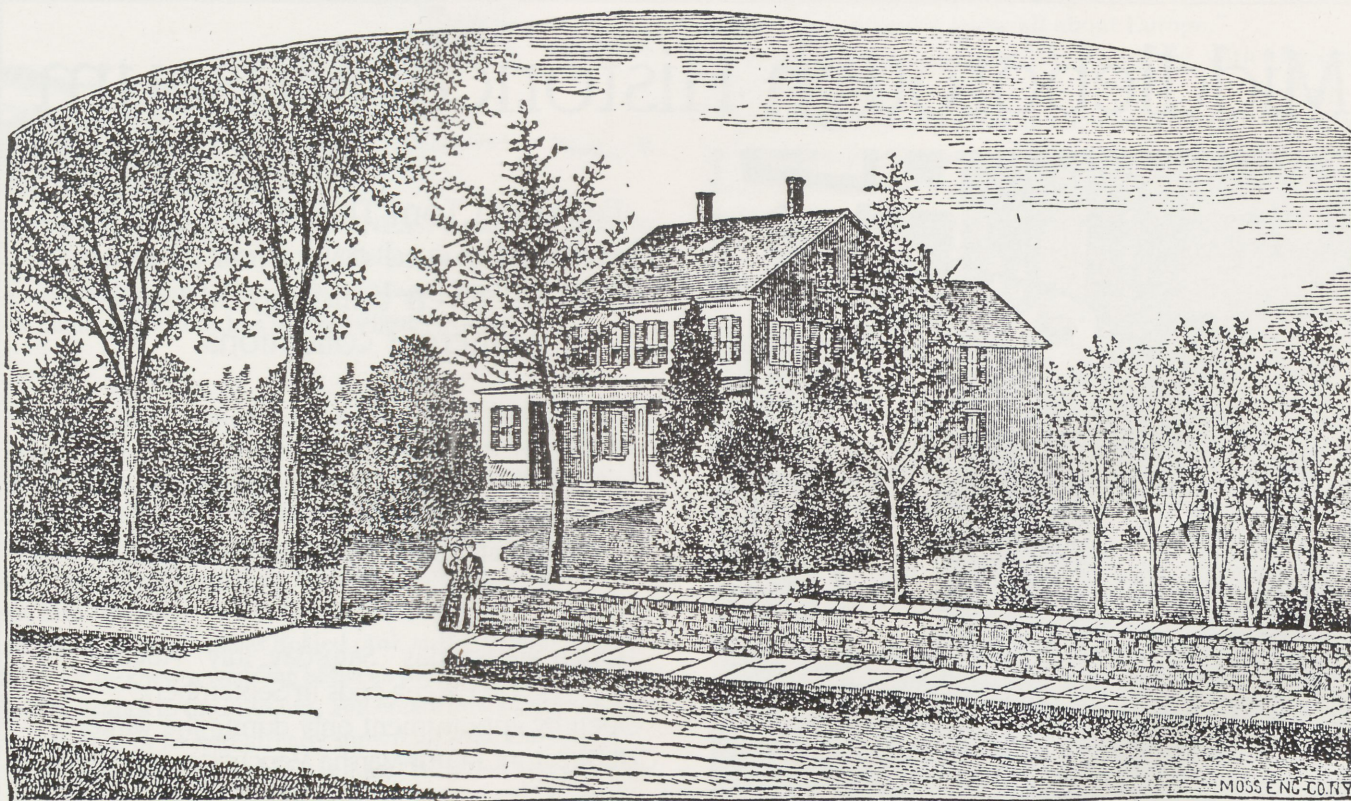
The fine reputation of the school brought pupils from all parts of the New England States and as far away as Virginia and New Brunswick. The Eatons continued to conduct the institution until 1897. The following year, Mr. Eaton was ap-

pointed town clerk, treasurer and collector of taxes for the town of Middleborough, positions he held until his death in 1910.

Over the years, many families have made this their home. I spent many years of my early life, beginning in 1928, at the home of my paternal grandparents at 14 East Grove Street. I remember the Owens family (well-known movers) living there until they moved to another home on Peirce Street. Other families - Hadsells, Bracketts, Wilcox, and a Mrs. Krawshaw lived there.

I also remember the large classroom on the first floor of an "el" that extended from the main house back to the barn. Some of the blackboards were still in place and we used to play school and write on them with chalk. On the second floor were several small rooms where pupils slept many years ago.

The "el" and barn were demolished a long time ago. The main house has undergone several changes over the years, but basically remains as it appeared in its original form. Heritage Oil Company is the current owner.



THE EATON FAMILY SCHOOL, founded about 1854 as a boarding school for boys, attracted students from all over New England until it ceased operations in 1897. The building on East Grove Street housed many local families over the years before being returned to business use. It currently serves as the headquarters for Heritage Oil Company.

Alphabetical Rhymes

This "bit of poetry" was found inside the bandsman's hat of John Carter, from the Middleborough Commercial Band. The year is unknown. The hat was donated to the Middleborough Historical Museum during the summer of 1995.

While walking the streets one fine summer day,
My thoughts fell to rhyming in a curious way.
Of the men of influence I knew in town,
And lest I forget them, I noted them down.

A stands for Alden, of Straw Shop renown,
Whose works are sent for from every town.

B stands for Bowen, our Baptist Divine,
You all ought to hear him, he preaches so fine.

C stands for Carter, who plays in the band;
Also for Chandler, our favorite hack-man.

D is for Doane, who would call your attention,
To all kinds of goods, too numerous to mention.

E is the Editor, who walks about town,
To gather the items of news floating around.

F is for Fryer, who cures all the ills
Of his patients, by giving them small sugar pills.

G stands for Grant, who preaches the word;
In the Congregational Church he is heard.

H is for Hayden, who will mend a clockspring,
And sell you a watch, or a fine gold ring.

I is for ice cream, we all like so well,
Tripp and Barden both have it so well.

J is the Jones Brothers, they say it is certain,
They will put down a carpet or hang up a curtain.

K is for Kingman, who has such lovely flowers
That the ladies go there and tarry for hours.

L is for Leonard, who makes shoes and boots,
A good place to work, if you happen to suit.

M is for MacBurney, who points us the way
To Jesus, our Savior, if we will obey.

JC

N is the Nemasket, whose waters so sweet,
Flow through our town on every street.

O stands for Osborne, who has tickets for sale,
To all who wish to travel by rail.

P is for Pierce, who sells hardware and tin,
And everything else, it will pay to go in.

Q is the question, What shall be done?
To drive the Rumseller out of our town?

R stands for Ryder, who sells dry goods and toys,
And dolls for the girls and books for the boys.

S stands for Smith who doctors the ills,
And for Shaw who puts up his powders and pills;
Also for Soule who carries off the dead,
And for Surrey who puts up a stone at the head;
Also for Sullivan who will read you the will
When the funeral is over and all is still.

T stands for Thatcher who sings loud and clear;
He is going away, we wish he would stay here.

U is our Union, may the flag ever wave,
O'er the land of the free and home of the brave.

V is for Vaughan who lives on School Street,
A carpenter and does his work very neat.

W stands for Wood, there are many to be seen,
But Andrew Cobb Wood is the one I mean.

X is the crosses we all to share,
Y is for Young, who shaves and cuts hair.

Z is for Zoeggele, who drives through the town,
And sells pastry and white bread and brown.

& the letters are ended, my story is done,
Sometime I may write a better one.

Author Unknown

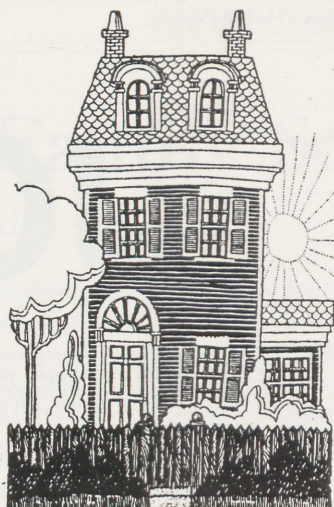
A

B

C

D

News
from
home



For the past 139 years, we've been giving you the news you need in Middleboro, Lakeville, Freetown and surrounding communities. Accurate, penetrating government news, sharp school sports coverage, and features about the people who make our towns special places to live and work... you'll find all of this and more each and every Thursday morning in your hometown newspaper.

The Middleboro Gazette

Serving Middleboro, Lakeville and Freetown
148 West Grove St., PO Box 551, Middleboro, MA 02346

947-1760

IT'S A
GOOD TIME
FOR THE
GREAT TASTE™

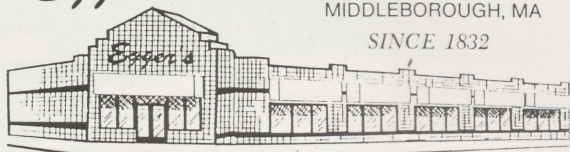


Buses Welcome
4 Clark Street
Middleboro Center Exit 4
Off Rt. 495
Middleboro, MA
947-5600

Egger's FURNITURE COMPANY

MIDDLEBOROUGH, MA

SINCE 1832



"New England's Oldest Furniture Store"

177 CENTER ST.
DOWNTOWN MIDDLEBORO

947-0680

A ANDERSON CUSHING

Insurance Agency, Inc.

148 West Grove Street, Middleboro, MA 02346 947-3036/947-1385

1 Chace Road, Crossroads Common, E. Freetown, MA 02717 763-3739

WE'RE YOUR MORE-THAN-ONE-COMPANY AGENT.



LINCOLN-MERCURY

ROUTE FORTY-FOUR RAYNHAM, MASS. 02780
(508) 880-0000 FAX (508) 824-1653

Historical Gifts Available At Middleborough Historical Museum Jackson Street

"GENERAL TOM THUMB & HIS LADY"
Hardcover \$10.00 Softcover \$7.00

TOM THUMB WEDDING CUP PLATES \$7.00

1855 MAP OF MIDDLEBOROUGH \$15.00

1881 MAP OF MIDDLEBOROUGH \$10.00

Recollections of the Peirce Brothers

Charles, William R., James E., and Thomas S.

by William H. Crapo

These notes are from the memories of a boy who lived in one of the Peirce houses on Jackson street, whose spare time was spent enjoying the fields, meadows and river that bordered sections of the Peirce estate.

In those days there was a large stock barn with twenty or more head of milch cows, two pair of oxen, and a number of young stock. Twenty-five to thirty pigs lived under the barn. The bay horse, however, the constant companion of William R. Peirce who ran the farm, was housed on the hill at the Peirce residence.

William R., or Bill as we knew him, always wore a Prince Albert coat that reached his knees. He rode his Goddard buggy over the vast farm lands but seldom walked. I once saw him take a rather long walk from the upper hay field (now the ball field) to the hydraulic ram located in a spring hole fairly deep in the meadow toward the Star Mill. This for Bill was a long walk. Apparently the ram was not functioning properly at the house where tanks stored water for the store and barn, and required immediate attention. As boys we could never understand how this ram, with its tick, tick, ticking, like a grandfather's clock, could keep pumping day and night apparently with no engine or fuel.

Even after the arrival of city water, this system continued to supply the barn where the herd of Guernseys was washed every morning before going out to pasture. The rich milk was dispensed by Mrs. Gideon Thomas who lived in one of the Peirce houses on Jackson street too. The entire supply, with the exception of one four quart can, was sold at five cents a quart. Some of it was delivered to select customers by Harold Thomas in a four-wheeled cart. Harold in later years owned a grocery store on Centre street known by the firm name of Lucas and Thomas.

The cows were of course milked by hand. The milk was strained into a tall metal container. It was pure warm milk — no pasteurizing, or homogenizing — with the original vitamins intact, for five cents a quart. The farm was managed by overseer Bill Peirce, boss farmer William Shaw, assistant head workman David Thompson, and workmen farmers Elisha Shaw and Mike McBarron, the latter a recent immigrant from Ireland.

I remember one haying time when a number of us boys were on hand to tread the hay as it was pitched on the long twenty foot wagon. When it was time to bring up the other team of oxen, Mr. Shaw suggested that I bring them in from the lower pasture near Charlie's Rock some distance away. I jumped at the chance, as this was considered a great honor. Dave Thompson handed me the long rawhide whip, and I marched bravely off toward the white faces. However, when they saw this boy coming, they lowered their heads and lumbered to meet me at a rather quick pace. I jumped aside, and tried again to lead them, but they chased me a ways up the hill. I concluded it was time to give up. Looking back I saw the workmen all

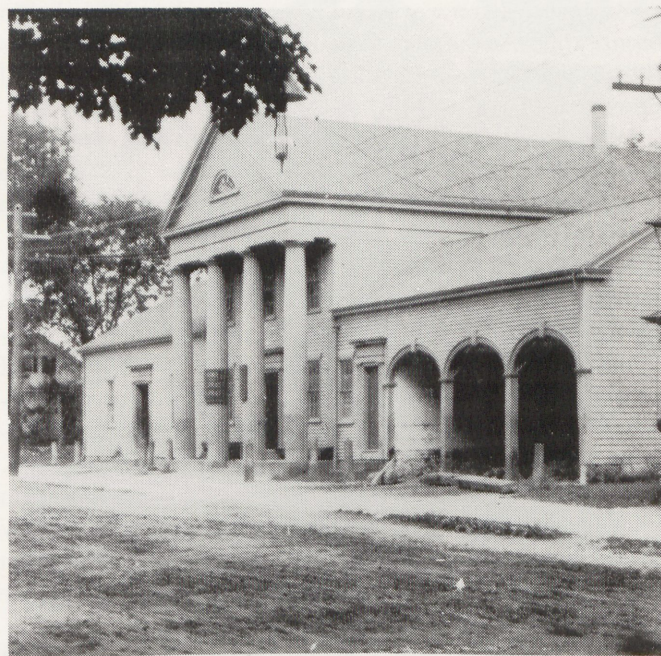
laughing, Bill Peirce with the others, all slapping their knees in glee over my inglorious defeat. Giving Elisha Shaw the whip, I watched him drive the docile white faces up the slope to the waiting gear. The oxen would have no part with a small boy directing them.

Charles was often seen in the store but did not have a partnership in the farm or business at that time, James was one of the partners but was very different from Thomas, who in his slow deliberate way, accomplished far more. The store was stocked with bolts of cloth and the usual line of dry goods of the period, besides a limited amount of hardware and fruit. Thomas S. Peirce was the real head of the store, and it was his money that built the Peirce Block and the Public Library. At his death he left over half a million dollars to the town. Although it has been stated that much of the Peirce estate came through the sale of liquor, there was no evidence of it during my life.

Tom Peirce, as we called him in those days, always wore a tall grey beaver hat and a mottled vest. The vest had four pockets filled with coins — large one and two-cent pieces, half cents, two sizes of three-cent pieces and half dimes — from which he would always flip the customer the right change, without looking at it.

All in all, the Peirce brothers operated a pretty successful farm and store.

Reprinted From The
Middleborough Antiquarian
— April 1959 —



THE FORMER PEIRCE STORE on North Main Street once housed the Fourth District Court, and currently serves as headquarters of the Middleborough Police Department. Samples of the store's old-time inventory can be found in the Historical Museum.

The Early Meetings with the Wampanoags

By Robert Barboza, Editor

The earliest meetings between Europeans and the Native Americans who made up the Wampanoag Federation will probably be lost forever to verifiable history, though enough scraps of information remain to suggest a tantalizing array of theories about the earliest "clashes" of these two cultures.

For centuries now, historians and archeologists have debated the comings and goings of Norsemen, early Portuguese explorers, and the English adventurers who proceeded the first English settlers in southeastern Massachusetts.

In the mid 1800's, a Rhode Island professor published a theory suggesting Norse explorer Lief Erickson visited Cape Cod and the area around Bristol, Rhode Island sometime between 1007 and 1010 AD with 160 men in three ships, and wintered over on the shores of Mount Hope Bay. Runic figures carved into a rock on the shore of a farm in that town prompted the interest in the Norsemen, but were not the only evidence the professor could muster.

A description of what could have been Cape Cod Bay or Narragansett Bay in the 13th century writings "The Norseland Sagas" was offered as further evidence, along with passages which tell of Thorfinn Karlsefni's death in 1010 AD in Vineland. Could that have been near the Rhode Island farm, or perhaps in the area of Kingston known as Rocky Nook, a peninsula where a Norse axehead was found in 1921, along with artifacts including a Scandinavian weaving tool?

Perhaps Thorfinn perished on a riverbank near the junction of the Taunton River and Mount Hope Bay in Fall River, where an ancient skeleton was found in a sandbank in 1831 clad in bronze armor, of the same composition of 10th century artifacts from Denmark, and with other indications of Viking burial practices.

We'll never know the truth, or exactly what kind of relations those windblown Scandinavians could have had with the Wampanoags known to reside in these neighborhoods. We can only guess, aided by the discoveries of the archeologists.

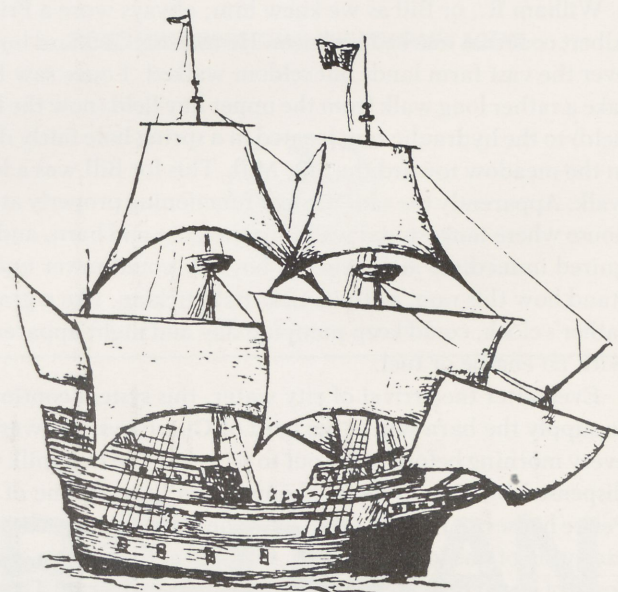
More detailed records, letters and maps document the exploration of New England by Portuguese explorers dating back to 1472, when John Vaz CorteReal returned to Lisbon after discovering "The Land of Cod" (Newfoundland). The reports of plentiful fish and more abundant natural resources earned CorteReal the governorship of the Azores, and royal support for another 20 years of exploration along the shores of this new land.

His son, Gaspar CorteReal, voyaged to Newfoundland in 1500, and sent back one of his two ships with samples of his New World discoveries, including about 50 natives, probably from Canada or northern Maine, described in a 1501 letter sent home by an Italian spy in Lisbon shortly after the ship's arrival.

"They kidnapped nearly 50 of the men and women of that land by force, and brought them to the king. I have seen them, touched and examined them," the spy wrote. "They are bigger than our people, with well-formed limbs to correspond.

The hair of the men is long, as we wear it, letting it hang in plaited rings . . . their speech cannot be understood, but there is no sharpness in it, and it is altogether human."

Although they were "naked except for a small covering made of deerskin" these Native Americans may have been members of the Abeneki Nation of Maine or southern Canada, but probably did not include any Wampanoags from this area. That contact was possibly made later, as Gaspar CorteReal continued his explorations along the New England coastline.



When he failed to return from those explorations southward, Gaspar's brother Miguel prepared a ship and set off to find his lost sibling, sailing for the New World in 1502. Miguel CorteReal also disappeared, never to return. Shortly after the English began their migration inland into southeastern Massachusetts over 100 years later, however, the new settlers began to hear tales of other white men coming to these shores long ago. Could it have been one or both of the CorteReal brothers?

Some historians believe the evidence lies on the shores of the Taunton River, where the "Dighton Rock" contains inscriptions believed to be a message left by Miguel CorteReal in 1511. Along with his name and the date, carvings representing the Portuguese royalty's coat of arms have been deciphered.

The Rev. John Danforth, in the process of acquainting himself with the folklore of his Wampanoag neighbors, wrote this in a 1680 letter: "It is reported from the tradition of the old Indians, that there came a wooden house swimming up the

Please continue on Page 13

The Early Meetings...

river Asonet, that fought the Indians and slew their Saunchem. Some interpret the figures here to be hieroglyphical. The first figure representing a ship, without masts, and a meer wreak upon the Shoales."

The violent clashes with Europeans would become all too familiar to the local Wampanoags, although the English that came sailing along their coastline may not have been too hostile at first. Records show Sir Francis Drake (1586) and Bartholomew Gosnold (1602) sailed along Buzzards Bay and Cape Cod Bay and had some meetings with the Wampanoags on Martha's Vineyard, the Cape area, and the South Shore.

Expeditions continued, with Captain Thomas Hunt reportedly carrying off a number of native prisoners during his visit in 1614. Included in the group later sold into slavery in England was a young man who would come to be known as Squanto, the friend to the Pilgrims. He lived with a merchant named Slaine until 1619, records indicate, when he boarded Captain Thomas Dermer's ship for a journey back to his homeland.

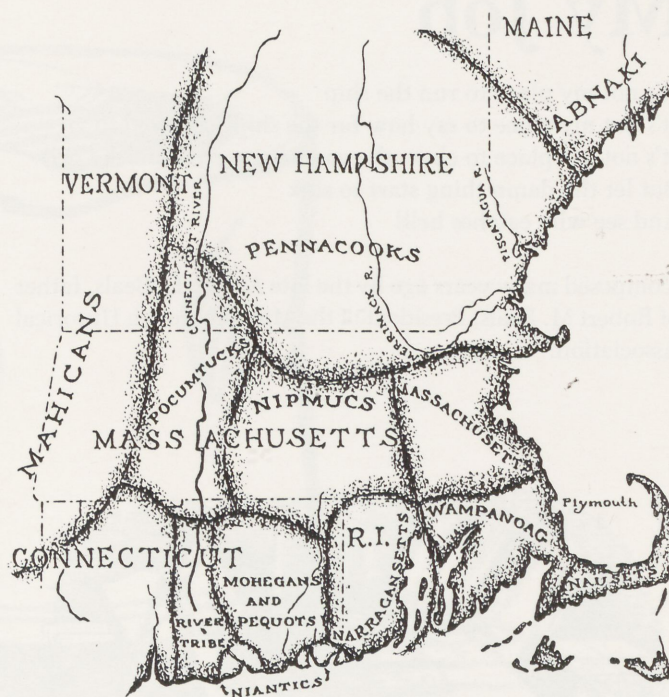
The good captain was probably the first Englishman to get to meet Massasoit, the Grand Sachem of the Wampanoags. His account of his movements ashore included a landing at Patuxet, Squanto's old home, where they found a deserted village apparently struck by "a great sickness" that had felled all the inhabitants. The Pilgrims would later settle on that spot.

Traveling into the forest from Plymouth, they went west "a day's journey, to a place called Nemasturghurt (the area near Middleboro center) and met with the people there, Dermer wrote. Through Squanto, he "dispatched a messenger a day's journey further west to Pokonokit, which bordered on the sea, whence came to see me two kings, attended with a guard of fifty armed men, who being desirous of novelty, gave me consent in whatsoever I demanded."

Historians believe those two kings were none other than Massasoit, grand sachem of the Wampanoags, and his brother Quadaquina. As a footnote, Capt. Dermer reported he believed the natives would have killed him if it had not been for his guide, Squanto.

Another report of that same expedition includes the details of the recovery of two Frenchmen who had been shipwrecked on those shores three years earlier, and had been cared for by the Wampanoags since that time.

Two years later, in July of 1621, a pair of English settlers, Edward Winslow and Stephen Hopkins, would journey to Sowams, one of Massasoit's principal dwelling places (present-day Warren, Rhode Island), on a trade mission. They brought gifts and opened negotiations for regular trade between the settlers and their gracious hosts. A whole new chapter in the story of the relationship of these two cultures had just been opened.



NEW ENGLAND TRIBES

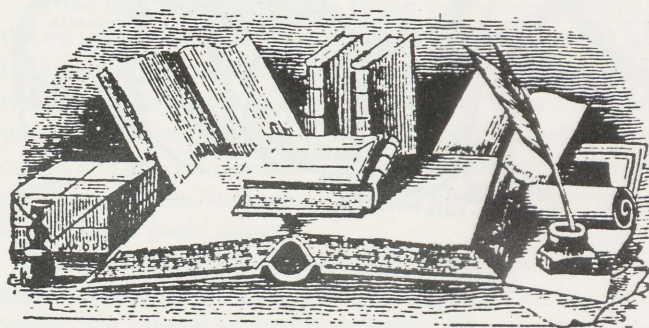


LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT was how P. T. Barnum's star attraction, Gen. Tom Thumb, described his initial meeting with his future bride, Middleboro's Lavinia Warren. Together, they travelled the globe entertaining thousands over the years.

My Job

It's not my place to run the ship
It's not my place to say how far the ship's allowed to go
It's not my place to chart the course nor even toll the bell
But let the damn thing start to sink
And see who catches hell!

Composed many years ago by the late Austen L. Beals, father of Robert M. Beals, President of the Middleborough Historical Association.

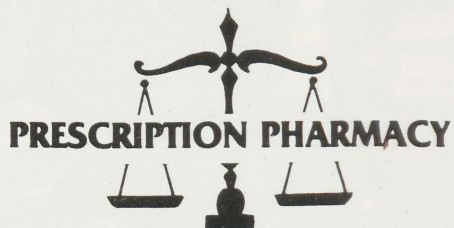


BETTY MURPHY, GRI CRS
Certified Residential Specialist
Graduate Realtors Institute



Real Estate

23 South Main Street
Middleboro, MA 02346
(508) 947-1413



PRESCRIPTION PHARMACY

38 CENTRE STREET
MIDDLEBORO, MA 02346
947-1909

Marcel R. Chretien, R.Ph.



(508)
946-2121

Open Tues.-Fri. 11:00am-5:00pm

Vintage White Linens

Marsha L. Manchester
21 South Main Street
Middleboro, MA 02346



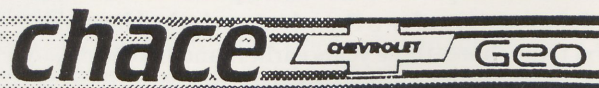
"Our personalized services are free"

Center Street · Middleboro, MA 02346
508-947-5165

L. H. Chace & Sons Chevrolet, Inc.

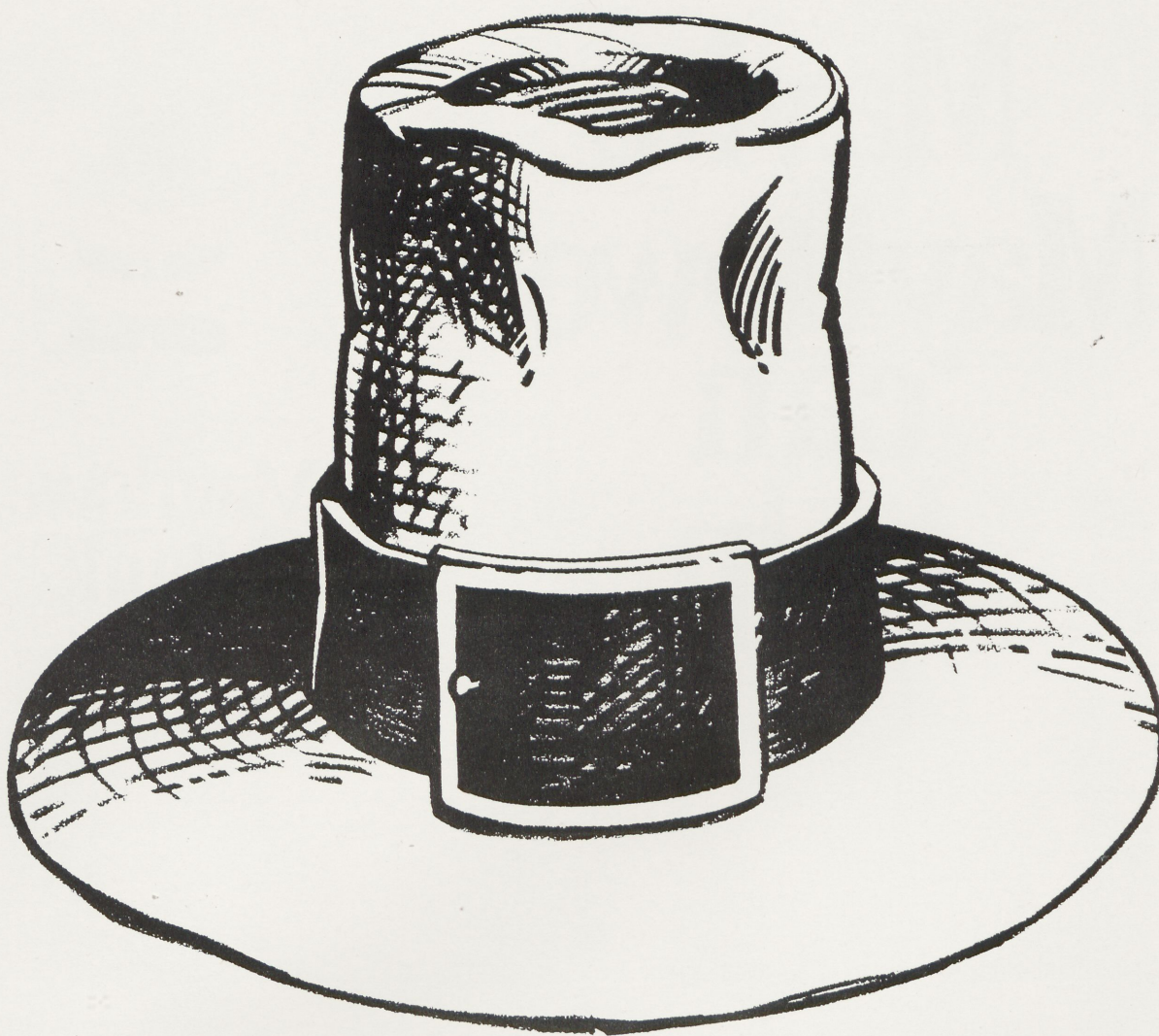
Established 1926

People who appreciate
value and honesty
do business at
Chace Chevrolet!



Route 105 at Junction I-495, Middleboro
947-2600

TOLL FREE 800-649-9202



We've got everything the big banks
offer, under one familiar roof.

Plymouth Savings Bank offers competitive banking products, coupled with friendly, personal, caring service. That's why folks prefer the bank that hangs its hat right here.



PLYMOUTH SAVINGS BANK

Big Bank Products, Small Bank Caring.

Member FDIC/DIF

1-800-649-3330

COTUIT DUXBURY FALMOUTH LAKEVILLE MARION MASHPEE MATTAPOISETT MIDDLEBOROUGH MIDDLEBOROUGH CTR. NO. PLYMOUTH PLYMOUTH SANDWICH TEATICKET WAREHAM

Maybe Mayflower can help.



Mayflower
Co-operative
Bank

Member FDIC/SIF

MIDDLEBOROUGH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION, INC.

P.O. Box 304
Middleboro, Massachusetts
02346

NONPROFIT ORG.
BULK RATE
U. S. POSTAGE
PAID

MIDDLEBORO, MASS.
PERMIT NO. 97

George C. Decas
P.O.Box 201
Middleboro, MA 02346